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LORD PARSVA

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FOREWORD

पारसप्रभु के नामसे सर्व आपदा जाए ।

दर्शनसे भवभय मिटे पूजनपाप पलाए ॥

(Translation). At the mention of the name of Parasva Prabhu (Lord) disturbances cease at once !—

His *darsan* (sight) destroys the fear of re-births, His worship, (the effect of) evil-doing !

Time had again rolled by. No less than 84,000 years had passed since Bhagwan Nemi Nath's *nirvana*. There had been no Tirthankara since then. During this time the earth had not known the joy of the contact of Divine Feet. Omniscient Saints no longer roamed over the country-side to inspire men by their example and to urge them on to Truth. Dharma itself had fallen into disfavour, disuse and oblivion in the world of men on the earth !

Suddenly, one fine morning the residents of Varanasi (modern Benares) heard the sounds of heavenly music and the singing of celestial choristers in the sky overhead. Heavenly flowers, mixed with fragrant water and precious gems rained down all over the place ! They soon learnt the cause of the wonderful phenomena. It was the announcement of approaching good luck ! A Tirthankara, the twenty-third, was soon to incarnate to lighten the burdens of all that breathed ! The path was once again to be re-opened for men to glorious Divinity and everlasting joy !

The event prophesied took place six months afterwards. The Indra of the thirteenth heaven passed into the womb of Mother Vama to be born among men! Next morning Devas (residents of heavens), all mortal like ourselves assembled in the Palace of King Ashvasena to celebrate the happy event. Every body looked happy, King Ashvasen and Queen Vama were overjoyed ; the whole assemblage cheered and rejoiced !

At last on the eleventh day of the first half of the month of Poush in the year 246 before Mahavira the Light of the World incarnated into the world in the form divine, as man! There were rejoicings and celebrations in which again Devas joined with men.

A few years again roll by. The child Parasva is now a handsome youth. Those who behold him are amazed at His beauty and strength, above all at His wonderful indifference to the concerns and temptations and joys of the world. His father's throne has no attraction for Him ; nor female loveliness, any charms !

Soon He sets out to fulfil His purpose in life. The unwilling consent of the kith and kin is obtained to renounce the world. Again the Devas come down to celebrate the Great Renunciation. The prince is taken to the forest in a heavenly palanquin. There He takes to sannyasa to destroy his weakly mortal nature.

On the 14th day of the dark part of the month of Chaitra a few years later the Devas

and men again assembled to celebrate another happy event of the greatest importance to the world. The Lord had destroyed all the inimical forces of Karma ! He had become Omniscient literally, All-Knowing !

Thereafter the Divine Conqueror roamed about to spread the Light of Truth Divine to all living beings. Nature welcomed Him right royally wherever He went. Flowers and fruits appeared on the trees out of season ; poverty and dearth flew away to great distances ; peace and joy reigned for hundreds of miles around ! Even hostile natures forgot their natural antagonism ; the lion playcd fondlingly with the fawn !

Celestial architects erected a divine pavilion for the Lord's preaching wherever He went. Devas, and men gathered round Him to hear the joyous Truth, many animals also flocked into the pavilion, and were filled with joy and peace in the presence of the Lord. All were athirst for the message of Love from the Divine Preacher !

For years the Holy Lord went about enlightening and gladdening the hearts of all. At last on the 7th day of the bright half in the month of Shravan when He was 100 years of age, the Divine Teacher effected a complete separation between His Immortal Spirit and the mortal flesh ! Thus was death, the last enemy (of life) swallowed up in Victory ! Separated from matter and the body of matter, the Eternal Spirit is now

residing at the topmost part of the Universe in the Happy Abode of Gods ! There is never any falling back from this condition !

The life of the Holy Lord is an object-lesson to all who care to follow Him on the Path. His own brother in a previous life, nine incarnations prior to the last one, became His mortal enemy. Life after life did he pursue the object of that enmity. In each incarnation he gratified his vile hatred by taking that innocent life. Yet, the soul of Parasva, ever unruffled, ever tranquil, always rose above the weaker nature and cheerfully forgave the slayer ! Surely Tirthankarhood was the well merited reward of such unparalleled gentleness !

Such was Parasvanath Jinendra (the Lord of the Conquerors) whose life has been delineated in the following pages by a dear friend. Mr. Harisatya Bhattacharji has a Jaina's heart. There are not many who have made such a thorough study of Logic and Philosophy as Mr. Bhattacharji has done. His sympathy, broadmindedness and devotion to truth are evident from his writings. May he live long and joyfully is the wish of my heart !

This is all the introduction that is needed from me to "Lord Parasva" composed by a distinguished non-Jaina friend.

Simla, 31st July 1927.

C. R. JAIN,

Vidya Varidhi

LORD PARSVĀ

I

"Transitory surely this world," so thought one day Visvabhuti, the minister of King Arabinda of Podanapura when he saw a hair in his head grown gray, "and this life with all its pleasures will some day come to an end: it is not right to remain stupefied in this worldly existence any further." He did not stop to consider but went off to the path of Emancipation,—leaving behind him Anundharee, his wife, two sons, Kamatha and Marubhuti by name and money and wealth which the people were not wrong in calculating to the boundless.

Although Kamatha was the elder, Marubhuti was more loved by his father because of his noble nature. Finding that Kamatha was crafty, the pious Visvabhuti, when he left the world, nominated Marubhuti as his successor in office. Marubhuti's character earned for him the love and confidence of King Arabinda also. So when the king marched against his rival, King Vajravirya at the head of his army, he did not feel the

least anxiety as regards the safety of his kingdom in his absence.

In the absence of King Arabinda, the vicious Kamatha, however, began to think himself as the king ; his oppression and highhandedness knew no bounds. Varuna was Kamatha's wife ; but his inordinate lust and passion did not find full satisfaction in the wedded wife. It so happened one day that he forgot himself on seeing Vasundhara, his brother Marubhuti's wife. He kept his eyes fixed on the beauty of Vasundhara as long as she was within his sight. The more he saw her, the more he felt unable to remain satisfied with mere sight. When that lady went away and could no longer be seen, the rogue fell on the ground in the bower of his garden, exhausted and ill at heart. His friend Kalahangsa came and when he learnt what had happened, he appealed to his moral sense reminding him how the wife of one's neighbour should be looked upon as one's own mother and how the wife of the younger brother should be treated as one's own daughter. But with all this, the fiery passion of the devil was not to subside. He plainly told his friend that he would commit suicide if he would not have the opportunity.

enjoying Vasundhara once at least. Kamatha caught hold of the hands of Kalahangsa and burst out in sobs like a boy.

"Your brother-in-law is lying ill in the grove," said Kalahangsa to Vasundhara, "and you do not take care of him!"

In haste did the dutiful lady run towards the bower and without doubting the veracity of the perfidious Kalahangsa she entered into the grove. The pen shrinks from recording what happened next. It was all over with Vasundhara!

Vanquishing his foes, King Arabinda made a triumphal entry into Podanapura. Kamatha's acts of oppression were reported to him by all persons, upon which the king asked Marubhuti. "What should be the proper punishment for this scoundrel?"

A desire for vengeance was raising its head in one corner of Marubhuti's heart but magnanimity and a spirit of forgiveness, characteristic of the Brahmanas of those ages, suppressed it at last. "My Lord," said Marubhuti, "be pleased to forgive him this time."

Arabinda was astonished at the wonder-high-mindedness of Marubhuti but said

with firmness. "It does not become of a king to be kind to one who is really guilty and ought to be punished. Please, go home and do not be sorry"

Then at the order of the king, Kamatha's face was painted black. He was seated on the back of an ass and led through the various places of the city. And then he was expelled from the kingdom.

Sad and despondent, Kamatha took to the practice of penances. He had no spirit of renunciation, no real moral sense in him; yet he repaired to the hermitage in Bhutachala mountain and began to practise severe penances according to the instructions of the hermits there. Marubhuti, when he heard of the penances practised by his brother, sincerely believed that Kamatha's heart was really purified at last. King Arabinda tried to dissuade him, and told him. "Even the pious acts, done by a rogue like Kamatha, are dangerous,"—yet the loving Marubhuti could not prevent himself from visiting his elder brother. He fell at the feet of Kamatha and said. "Please pardon me. The king has transported you inspite of my entreaties to the contrary. Please, come home. The practice of such severe penances is too

much for you. I am mortified at your exile."

Kamatha used to stand up day and night, carrying in his hands a heavy slab of stone. It was very tiresome but he did so, as an act of penance. Marubhuti's expressions were as gentle and tender as ever but Kamatha became furious all on a sudden. In rage, he hurled that heavy stone at the head of his brother. Marubhuti's death was instantaneous.

The hermits shuddered at this cruel act of Kamatha and they expelled him from the hermitage. He then went to the village of the Bhils and becoming intimate with them, began to commit theft, murder and other sinful acts.

"I forbade him many a time" said King Arabinda when the news of his minister's sad death was communicated to him by a sage, "such a regrettable death might well have been avoided, if he did not go and visit that scoundrel!"

II

Varuna, wife of Kamatha, died.

None is immortal in this world; so, there came a time when Kamatha also died.

A piece of cloud was flying in the sky. It was very beautiful in form,—much like a temple. King Arabinda was sitting in his palace, viewing with rapt attention the beauty of that piece of cloud. He was a very pious monarch and so he determined to have a Jaina temple built, which would resemble that cloud. In order to have a picture of that cloud, he brought pens and paints and turned to the sky. But alas,—where was that cloud? It was no more,—it had vanished in the flow of change. A weird thought came into the mind of Arabinda,—Is the world but a series of impermanent phenomena? Empire, wealth, life—all shall leave him some day! Why then, should he call things “mine” and what was the good of continuing in his worldly career?

Arabinda called his son and installed him on his throne. Laying the burden of governing his extensive empire on the prince he went out as a homeless hermit, never to return. And there passed off many years after that.

Emperor Arabinda wandered from forests to forests,—a saint free from all kinds of desire. One day, he started for the sacred

hill of Sammeda. A dense forest, known as Sallaki, was on his way. There were many other saints with him and all were assembled in Sallaki forest. Suddenly, there arose a great hubbub in that congregation of holy men. A huge elephant was found to rush upon the saints in mad fury. And lo! it runs toward Arabinda with uproarious sound! Immersed in deepest contemplation, Arabinda was standing then, absolutely unmoved, and the sacred sign (Sri-vatsa) was distinctly visible on his breast.

At the sight of the saint Arabinda, the turbulent creature suddenly became calm.—as if some incidents in its past life,—the series of happy and unhappy events that constituted its gone-by incarnation, suddenly came up to its mind. It lowered its trunk and bowed down to the sage.

"Why are you continuing in acts of injury?"—addressed Arabinda to the elephant, "there is no sin more heinous than injuring others. Your reincarnation as an elephant is caused by the demerit due to the violent nature of your unnatural death. Still, you are not afraid of committing sinful acts! Give it up,—follow what is good—and

practise vows. Thereby, a happy state will be in store for you."

Who was this elephant? Owing to his violent and unnatural death, the minister Marubhuti reincarnated as an elephant. Varuna the wife of Kamatha, too, reincarnated as a she-elephant in the forest of Sallaki. When Marubhuti began to ravage the Sallaki forest as a dreadful elephant, known far and wide, as Vajraghosha. Varuna the she-elephant was his constant mate. Such was the decree of the Law inexorable!

Vajraghosha now recollected the events of its past life. Its heart was broken at the enormity of the mischievous acts which it saw, it had committed. It took religious instructions at the feet of the sage Arabinda and firmly determined not to commit acts of injury any more and scrupulously practise the twelve vows, etc

When the sage Arabinda was going away, Vajraghosha followed him to a long distance and then returned after bowing down to him reverently. From that day forward, Vajraghosha began to practise strict non-injury. It used to feed on some grass only from time to time, just to keep its

body and soul together. To forgive one that harmed, to do good to friends and foes alike, to fast on sacred days, to observe strict purity in sexual matters,—such were its practices. As a result of its practising penances, Vajraghosha became very weak and emaciated,—but still it used to contemplate the Parameshtis or the Exalted Ones with its undivided attention.

One day, Vajraghosha was extremely thirsty and went to the river Begavati to drink water. On its bank, there was a terrible serpent called Karkata. Suddenly, the serpent ran towards Vajraghosha and bit it. This dreadful serpent was none other than Kamatha! Owing to the vicious nature of his human life, he reincarnated as a serpent. At the sight of Vajraghosha, the old spirit of enmity suddenly re-asserted itself and the serpent satisfied itself by biting the pious elephant.

Vajraghosha did not forget the sacred vows even at the time of its death. It died the death of Sallekhana or ‘the peaceful death of absolute renunciation’ and as a result of such death, it re-incarnated at the Svayamprabha Vimana in the twelfth heaven

as a god, named Sasiprabha. That god had a life of 16 Sagaras, while he passed happily in that heaven. Amidst the abundant pleasures of a heaven, he, however, did not for a moment forget that his godly status was due to the acts of piety done by him in his life as an elephant. Accordingly he continued to do pious acts even in heaven. Every day he used to visit the sacred places in the Svayamprabha Vimana and worship in Mahameru, Nandisvara and other holy temples.

Gods also have their deaths. At the end of the period of 16 Sagaras, Sasiprabha, the god, died.

III

Pushkalavati was a country in the eastern Videha in the continent of Jambudvipa and Lokottama was its chief city. Wise men, through their supernatural power of vision, came to understand that Agnivega, the prince born to the King Vidyutgati and the Queen Vidyunmala of Lokottama, was none other than the god Sasiprabha. Since his very childhood, Agnivega was a pious man. He ascended the royal throne of Lokottama on the death of his father. Amidst

the pleasures of a royal palace, King Agnivega was always found to do acts of religious merit.

One day there came a homeless sage to see the king. On hearing his discourses about the way to Liberation, he suddenly felt the religious sense awakened in him. The world lost all its charm to him. The king got himself initiated in the Order and through the practice of penances, his feelings of attachment, aversion etc., came to be feebler and feebler.

In a lonely cave of the Himagiri mountain, Agnivega who was once the mightiest emperor, was found lost in profound contemplation. He had no consciousness of the External. A dreadful snake came rushing towards him with furious sound and bit him. For a moment, the sage suffering from the poisonous snake-bite, looked towards the outside world ; his death was near,—the fiery poison was permeating every atom of his body, still Agnivega did not lose his temper. He welcomed death with calm submission.

This serpent which killed Agnivega, had been the serpent Karkata in its past life, from whose bite Vajraghoshha had died.

Karkata was thrown into the fifth hell after its death and suffered indescribable pains there for a period of sixteen Sagaras. On the termination of its hellish life, Karkata re-incarnated in the Himagiri mountain, as a snake. At the sight of Agnivega, its old spirit of hostility was rekindled which found its satisfaction in the killing of the royal sage.

IV

On his death, the sage Agnivega enjoyed the status of a god in the Achyuta heaven for a period of 22 Sagaras. When he died there as a god, he re-incarnated in this world as a man.

Asva was the metropolis of the country Padma in the western Videha in the continent of Jambu-dvipa. Vajravirya was the ruler of Asva and Vijaya was his queen. Queen Vijaya one night dreamt five auspicious dreams and described them before the king in the morning. Vajravirya was the wisest of monarchs; from the nature of the dreams, he understood that some god of the Achyuta heaven was about to be his son.

At the due time, the queen gave birth to a beautiful child on whose body there were

no less than sixty-four auspicious signs. The city of Asva resounded with joy at the birth of the prince. Vajranabhi as the son of Vajravirya was called, was proficient in all the branches of learning, when he was still a child. Kings of other countries eagerly gave their daughters in marriage to him. In time Vajranabhi began to rule the kingdom.

One day Vajranabhi entered into his store-house of weapons where he got a divine Chakra. It was a wheel-like weapon and its power was irresistible. When he was in possession of this mysterious weapon, he marched out to conquer the distant countries. He subjugated all the six continents on the two sides of the Vijayardha mountain and thus became the Imperial Overlord. The fourteen supernatural jewels also came to his hand. There seemed to be no limit to Vajranabhi's wealth and riches.

Although he was surrounded by imperial splendour, Vajranabhi did not forget the precepts of morality even for a day. He kept himself always engaged in the worship of the Jinas and the Preceptors, in fasting, in praying, in practising vows and in doing

acts of liberality. One day, a hermit named Kshemankara came to his court. The hermit was extremely pleased at the courteous behaviour of the monarch and he gave him religious instructions of supreme value. Suddenly, Vajranabhi's attachment to the world became loose. He renounced all his wealth and came out as a perfect saint. He practised penances and observed the prescribed vows and thereby he came to be possessed of all the true knowledge.

The serpent which had killed Agnivega was thrown into the sixth hell. It suffered dreadful pains there for a period of 22 Sagaras. That was the tenure of its life there. Upon the termination of its infernal life, the wretch was reborn into this world as a Bhil named Bihita-kuranga who wandered in forests killing beasts. Nothing was too vile and sinful to him. One day in a dense forest, he found Vajranabhi, the royal hermit who had renounced all things. All on a sudden, Bihita-kuranga came to recollect the events of his past life. Fired with a spirit of revenge, the cruel hunter shot at once the sharpest arrow at the sage. Immersed in purest contemplation, Vajranabhi died a peaceful death, absolutely

unperturbed. On his death, he became the blessed being, an Ahamindra in the celestial region called the mid-Graiveyaka.

Bihita-kuranga died too. At the time of his death, he was full of vilest thoughts and was consequently thrown into the seventh hell where he suffered indescribable pains for long, long ages

V

Vajrabahu was a descendant of King Ishshaku. He was the ruler of Ayodhya in Bharata-Khanda in the continent of Jambudvipa and was a faithful follower of the Jina. People were astonished at the superhuman beauty of the prince who was born to Vajrabahu in the womb of his Queen Prabhakari. This prince was none other but the Ahamindra and was named Anandakumara. There was none equal to him as regards beauty, quality and boldness. Many princesses married themselves to him. On his accession to the throne, Anandakumara defeated the kings of other countries and thereby became the Imperial Overlord.

“My Lord,” said his minister, Svamihita to the Emperor Anandakumara, who was seated on the throne. “This day in the

Spring season is a holy day of Nandisvara. People have observed this day and are now worshipping in the Jina temples. The worship of the Jina is a very meritorious act. My prayer is that you do that meritorious act in this sacred day."

The Emperor was much pleased at what his minister told him. He arranged in his city the celebration of the festival. He took bath and respectfully worshipped the Jina-Lord in his temple with a pure heart. A doubt, however, remained lurking in his mind:—a doubt, which raises its head in the minds of many in the present day:—What is the use of worshipping the Idol which is unconscious?

Anandakumara laid his mind bare to Vipulamati, one of the wisest sages of the day. It may be that what Vipulamati said in reply would not be regarded as convincing by every opponent of image-worship; but certain it is that his reply consists in a matter which deserves our serious consideration.

"My Lord," said Vipulamati. "An Idol makes our heart pure or impure. When a red flower is held over a piece of clear glass,

the glass looks red ; when, on the contrary, a black flower is so held the glass looks black. Coming in contact with the Idol, minds of men also change their hue in the same way. Mind is automatically filled with a feeling of renunciation when it contemplates the form of the passionless Lord in a Jina temple. It becomes restless, on the contrary, at the sight of a tempting courtesan. When one sees the absolutely peaceful form of the Lord or worships Him, he naturally calls to his mind the noble qualities of the Lord : and thereby his mind becomes purer. With the purity of the mind, a man is put on the way to the final Bliss.

" Why should we doubt that the Idol which is external to us, is capable of modifying the state of our mind ? In a certain town, there died a beautiful public woman and her body was brought to the crematorium. There a licentious man looked at the wonderful beauty of her person and thought that he would have deemed himself fortunate if he had once in his life the opportunity of being intimate with her. A dog, on the contrary, when it found the dead body being given over to fire, thought how it would have made dainty meals for

him, had it not been wasted in fire? And then, there was a sage in that crematorium; he looked at the dead prostitute and regretted that a being with such a fine body did not take to the practice of penances. My Lord! There was but one corpse there; yet it generated three different feelings in three beings. It is thus that an external thing, although unconscious, may yet be effective. A man's heart is purified at the contemplation and the worship of the Jina-Idol; and thereby, one is enabled to enjoy the pleasures of the heaven on his death and sometimes, even to secure salvation."

The above discourse of Vipulamati dispelled Anandakumara's doubts regarding the efficacy of Idol-worship.

That sage told the Emperor many other curious things. There are many natural sacred temples and Vipulamati said that there was a fine natural Jina-temple in the Sun. Anandakumara wondered at this and resolved that he would worship the Jina-image in the Sun. From that day onward, he used to worship, meditate on and bow to the Jina-image in the Sun every morning and evening standing on the top of his

palace. In his own city, he had a Sun-Vimana built and within it, he had a Jina-temple erected. Every day he used to go to this temple and worship the Jina-Lord there. Soon his people began to imitate him ; they began to bow down to the Sun. Years passed away ;—the Jina-image in the Sun was forgotten ; and thus instead of the Jina-worship there grew up the cult of worshipping the Sun.

The Emperor was one day standing before a looking-glass in his court when he found that a hair in his head had become gray. Suddenly there arose in him an intense feeling of renunciation. Thereupon he made his son the king and got himself initiated into the order of the ascetics. The sage Sagaradatta was his preceptor and he took to the practice of severe penances. Owing to his practice of austerities, Anandakumara was possessed of superhuman powers. Wherever that royal sage stayed, there was no grief or sorrow, trees were bent with the weight of fruits and flowers, tanks, were filled with clear water and blooming lotuses and creatures like lions which were ferocious by nature were docile so much so that they actually played with them faws.

Anandakumara was kind to all and birds and beasts used to play near him without the least fear. In such a calm and peaceful atmosphere, the royal sage spent his time in self-meditation.

One day while Anandakumara was lost in deep contemplation, he was suddenly attacked by a lion. The monstrous beast tore him to pieces and ate him up. At the point of such a painful death, Anandakumara did not forget to forgive. He met his death quite calmly and was reborn as the Indra in the thirteenth heaven. He, however, kept himself away from the heavenly enjoyments and practised moral acts with undivided attention. He passed his life of 20 Sagaras of years there in worshipping the Jina and revealing the light of the true faith to the gods.

The lion that killed Anandakumara was none but the spirit of wicked Kamatha, reborn in this world after the termination of his life in the infernal region.

VI

Said the Indra of the Soudharma heaven to Kuvera :—

"The Indra of the thirteenth heaven will very soon incarnate on the earth. That happy thing is to take place within six months. This great Being will be the penultimate i.e., the twenty-third Tirthamkara. He will be born in the city of Varanasi in Kasi, a country in Bharata-Khetra within the continent of Jambu-dvipa. King Visvasena, a descendant of Ikshaku rules over Varanasi. That pious monarch is possessed of sensuous, scriptural and clairvoyant forms of knowledge. The faithful Bama-devi is his queen. The Tirthamkara will be the son of this blessed couple. Be pleased to rain down the Five wonders in the kingdom of Varanasi."

The Lord of wealth began to act up to the order of Indra immediately.

From that day for six months in the kingdom of Visvasena, (1) there used to come down every day no less than 350 lacs of diamond-pieces, (2) the flowers of the heavenly Kalpa-tree used to fall, (3) clear water of sweetest fragrance used to pour down, (4) divine drums used to sound unseen and (5) the gods used to sing sweetly from the sky. The splendour of Varanasi

increased thousand-fold and the joy of the people knew no bounds.

Then in an auspicious night, the queen dreamt the sixteen famous dreams. When the wise king heard about the dreams, he clearly understood that he would get the Tirthamkara as his son. It was a night of the dark fortnight in the auspicious month of Vaisakha,—the throne of Indra trembled in heaven,—the would-be Tirthamkara descended in his mother's womb from the celestial region called Anata. The gods came down joyfully in their aerial cars to the city of Varanasi in order to celebrate the "Garbha-Kalyana," the first of the five Kalyanas or celebrations in connection with the earthly life of the Lord. They seated the King Visvasena and the Queen Bama-devi on a throne and poured sacred water on them from a golden pitcher. And then they prayed to the great Being in the queen's womb. The city of Varanasi resounded with divine music. Indra engaged some goddesses e.g. Sri, Hri etc. to take care of the pregnant queen; goddesses of the Ruchika continent began to serve her. To please Bama-devi, they used to talk on curious topics. Sometimes they put difficult

questions to her; but the queen quickly answered them as, it is said, she had in her womb no less a person than the Lord. One noteworthy fact in this connection was that the queen did never feel for a day any pain during the period of her pregnancy.

The celebrated son of the King Visvasena was born on the eleventh day of the dark fortnight in the month of Pousha. Once more, the throne of Indra trembled whereby the gods understood that the Lord saw the light of day. At once they came to Varanasi with tremendous pomp and celebrated the "Janma-Kalyana" of the Tirthamkara. This son of Visvasena was named Parsvanatha and he was the twenty-third Tirthamkara.

VII

King Mahipala was the father of Bama-devi. The world seemed to have put on a dismal, different appearance before him on the day his queen died. Royal wealth and splendour could ill-remove or mitigate the pain which his heart suffered. With calm resignation, he renounced his kingdom and went away to a dense forest.

There was no real spirit of renunciation

in Mahipala although he took to the practice of severest penances. With matted locks on his head and deer's skin as loin-cloth, Mahipala wandered from forest to forest until one day he came to the forest near Varanasi where he began to practise a penance with blazing fire on his five sides.

Prince Parsva who was blue in complexion like the purest diamond was slowly advancing in life's career. Sometimes on horseback, sometimes on the back of an elephant, he used to rove from place to place. Often he played in water with the gods. In all these boyish sports, however, a pure moral spirit was trying to manifest itself from within Parsva. People of Varanasi wondered,—Parsvanatha began to practise the twelve vows of a house-holder, when he was only eight years old.

Mounted on an elephant, the Prince one day entered into the forest of Varanasi with his play-mates and found the hermit Mahipala there doing penances in the midst of five fires. As soon as he saw Parsvanatha, Mahipala was extremely infuriated and cried out,—“Am I not your mother's father? I was born in an illustrious family and did give up all my royal riches. I am now an

anchorite, practising severest penances. What a proud fellow you are, that do not think it fit to make a salutation to me!" Thus rebuking the innocent prince, Mahipala turned away his face. Parsvanatha knew full well what sort of a hermit Mahipala was—yet he did not tell him anything in reply. By this time, the virulence of fire was lessening and Mahipala raised his axe to cut a huge block of wood which was lying near by "Wait a bit, Hermit,"—said Parsvanatha, preventing him with haste, "there is a serpent and its consort within this block; do not kill them in vain." Mahipala's rage was greatly increased at this and he exclaimed with scorn. "Are you Brahma? Or, are you Vishnu? Or, are you Siva? Prithee, say. You have I see, the power of seeing everything wherever it may be in the world" He did not pay heed to the prince's remonstrance and used the sharp edged weapon upon the wood.

The pair of serpents died a most painful death.

Parsvanatha's heart was broken at the sufferings of those two animals. "Were you not boasting of your penances, just

now?" said he. "Don't you feel any compassion for the suffering creatures? You are devoid of true knowledge. Your austerities are surely useless."

Mahipala was extremely angry at the prince's words. "You are a great saint and sage, I see," said he, shouting like a mad man. "I am your grandfather and you were born of my daughter's womb; besides, I am a hermit. For all this, you thought it beneath your dignity to bow to me. I practise the penance by lighting fires on five sides; I stand up on one leg and keep one of my hands raised up; I put up with thirst and hunger; I break my fasts on feeding on dry leaves; and certainly it is in the fitness of things that you would call my penances unwise and fruitless!"

"Your penances," said Parsvanatha in a sweet tone, "are not free from the spirit of envy. Every day you kill many animals. But know it for certain that to injure others, however little it may be, is a great sin; and sufferings are unavoidable results of sin. Penances, divorced from true knowledge are useless like chaff devoid of corn. An ignorant hermit dies in the fire of worldly

existence while undergoing the sufferings of penances, just as a blind man perishes in fire losing his way and running hither and thither in a forest which is being burnt down. Conduct is useless without right faith and right knowledge. Think for yourself, Hermit,—I am telling you nothing but what is right and useful. Give up the useless self-torturing which is unconnected with right knowledge. Follow the Jina Lord and have right faith and right knowledge and do right acts in the light of right faith and right knowledge,—for this is the way to Emancipation."

The prince then returned home.

The pair of serpents died calmly before the Lord who, for their future good, chanted the sacred hymn to their hearing. On account of this meritorious death of theirs, they were reborn in the under-world as Dharanendra and Padmavati and enjoyed unbounded happiness there.

Who was that Mahipala? The spirit of Kamatha had killed the saint as a lion; for this act of impiety, he had to suffer untold pains in the 'fifth' hell for a period of seventeen Sagaras. After that, he ha

various incarnations as a quadruped for three Sagaras. In the last life, he did some meritorious act and consequently was reborn as the King Mahipala.

In time, Mahipala died.

VIII

Prince Parsva who was now sixteen years old was sitting on the throne when his father Visvasena said in an affectionate tone, "My son! In order to continue our celebrated royal dynasty, you must marry now. At the desire of Nabhi-raja, you know, the Lord Rishabha had to enter into the marital relation."

Parsvanatha was, as it were, startled at this; an unknown fear seemed to spring up in his heart. "My life-period," said he firmly, "will not be so extensive as that of the Lord Rishbha. I am to live only for a hundred years. Of this short period, again, I have already whiled away sixteen years in boyish sports. In my thirtieth year, I must enter the Order. Should I then have a married life for so short a period in the hope of getting pleasures which are after all but imperfect?"

Every one was astonished at what the prince had said. King Visvasena was a wise monarch and through clairvoyant knowledge he understood that Parsva was on the way to Renunciation and that all efforts to call him back to the worldly course would be utterly useless.

Thirty years of Parsvanatha's worldly life passed away.

King Jayasena of Ayodhya was attracted towards Parsvanatha on account of his excellent qualities, from long before. In order to express his sincere respect, Jayasena sent a messenger to the kingdom of Varanasi with horses and other rich presents. The messenger laid the presents at the feet of Parsvanatha and respectfully intimated to him the cordial obeisance of the King of Ayodhya. After some conversations, the messenger said, "The sacredness of Ayodhya is well-known; in that kingdom, there flourished many a Tirthamkara."

Parsvanatha attentively listened to every word of the messenger who went on saying,—"Placed in the most tempting pleasures of the world, the Tirthamkaras avoided them, as if they were poison. With what great efforts, they succeeded in breaking off the

Karma-fetters and realising the great Bliss! The earth still bears their sacred memory and their teachings are still the guide of virtuous people."

Parsvanatha's heart was filled with a spirit of renunciation. He thought within himself:—"For long, long years I enjoyed the status of an Indra; yet the lust for pleasures did not abate I cannot of course expect to have more pleasures in this human life; why, then, should I continue in this worldly career? Of what use will the drops of water be to him whose thirst was not quenched by a whole sea of water? Enjoyment of pleasures does but increase the lust for pleasures just as the addition of fuel only serves to increase the virulence of fire. Pleasures at the time of their enjoyment are pleasant but their consequences are surely bad. Man dies from the effects of poison; just so, a soul experiences from the beginningless time the sufferings of birth, old age etc. on account of its attachment to the things of this world. To satisfy the cravings of his senses, man wanders in the realm of pain. To have sensual gratification, he does not heed to the moral injunctions and he perpetrates the worst vices. To have the

pleasures of sense, he injures and kills living animals. Sensual lust is at the root of theft, avarice, adultery and all vices and crimes. And as a consequence of sinful acts, the soul is compelled to migrate from birth to birth in the kingdom of lower animals etc. and to suffer the torments of hells. This lust for pleasures is to be avoided. So long I have but whiled away the time. I am not going to spend any more time in the vain pursuit of pleasures. Up to this time, I was foolish enough not to practise penances; this time, I shall be serious and practise right conduct."

Parsvanatha then had the twelve Anuprekshas or meditations and saw that the series of existences was beginningless, impure and painful and that the self was the only friend of itself. He determined that he must leave the world.

The throne of Indra trembled in heaven and thereby he came to know that the auspicious moment for Parsva's great renunciation had come. Thereupon the gods came down to celebrate the Kalyana for the third time. They offered flowers at the feet of Parsvanatha and said, "Lord! The auspicious moment is come. The world

is no good ; body is impure ; and all the things of the universe are but momentary. Sensual pleasures are ephemeral like phenomena seen in a dream. To-day, you are determined to tread the way to Emancipation by giving up the ways of the world ; the world will be benefitted thereby. To-day, you are about to kill the foe of Infatuation with the sword of Renunciation ; the queen of Emancipation awaits you. The world is sleeping deep under the baneful influence of Illusion ; this sleep will not subside without the clarion-call of your teachings. With what words are we to praise you ? You are the Enlightened, the Teacher of the infatuated souls and their Saviour. You are the great Sun before whom the lamp-like words of ours are insignificant. We have come to celebrate your renunciation of the world,—this much only lies in our power. You are now to do what you have decided on, to adopt the vows, to annihilate the Karma-foe, to dispel the darkness of ignorance and to reveal the Way to Bliss."

Then there arrived no less than four Indras with followers. The celestial trumpets were sounded, women-folk of the heavens began to dance and sing and the gods cried

out "Victory to the Lord!" The Indra of the Soudharma heaven came to Parsvanatha with a golden pitcher filled with the water of the Cream-Ocean. He seated the Lord on a throne and poured out the sacred water upon him. The Soudharma Indra adorned the body of Parsvanatha with beautiful ornaments etc., and sprinkled heavenly sandal upon it.

Parsvanatha then went to his parents for having their leave. King Visvasena, although his heart was being shattered at the grief, received the decree of fate calmly but Bama-devi could not suppress her tears. Parsvanatha consoled her with sweet and soft words and then left the place for good.

Indra had brought a beautiful palanquin to take Parsvanatha off. When Parsvanath was seated in it, it was the Bhumigochara king who had the privilege of carrying the divine palanquin on his shoulder for a space of seven footsteps. After him, the gods headed by the Indras carried it.

The palanquin reached the forest, Asva.

Parsvanatha got down from the palanquin and stood upon a pure slab of stone underneath a tree. The cry of the crowd of

men began to decrease gradually. With his own hands, Parsva took off all the ornaments etc. and became absolutely naked. Unbounded peace and perfect renunciation then filled his heart. He turned towards the north and with folded hands bowed down to the great Emancipated,—the Siddha Paramesthis. He shook off all forms of desire and plucked five tufts of hair from his head Indra took those five tufts of sacred hair and when returning to the heaven with his divine followers he reverently threw them into the waters of the Crem-Ocean.

It was the first quarter of the eleventh bright day of the moon in the month of Poūsha that Parsvanatha adopted the great vows and took to the deepest form of self contemplation, seated in the tightest posture. It is said that on that day no less than three hundred monarchs joined him in the act of being initiated:

IX.

With wonderful endurance, Parsva began to practise fasting etc. He used to observe with scrupulous care the 28 primary and the 94 secondary rules of the Order of the saints and was often found lost in meditation.

Gradually, he was possessed of the manaparyaya knowledge.

On the termination of a long period of undisturbed contemplation, Parsvanatha slowly went to the city of Gulmakheta in order to have his long fast broken. King Brahmadatta bowed down to him reverently and took him to his palace in a joyful spirit. He made him sit on a golden throne and himself washed his feet in pure water. He worshipped with sincerest veneration and when he fed him, his body, mind and speech were all pure. At the uncommon fortune of having the opportunity of welcoming Parsva, the god rained down the five Wonders in Brahmadatta's kingdom.

Parsvanatha returned to the forest and was again absorbed in contemplation. This had a mysterious influence in all parts of the forest where the reign of peace was an accomplished fact, so much so that the lions and other ferocious creatures went against their own nature and freely played with the tenderest fawns.

One day... Parsva was standing erect, wholly absorbed in self-contemplation, when the aerial car of Samvara, a god of the

Luminary order, suddenly stopped in its airy course. This was so because it is never possible to cross a great saint of Parsva's stamp, absorbed in meditation. Samvara had the clairvoyant knowledge and understood that the stoppage of his car was due to the power of Parsvanatha's presence. Suddenly, a curious knowledge flashed in his mind,—Parsvanatha was his enemy in all his varied incarnations. Samvara was but the spirit of devilish Kamatha. He determined to feed fat his ancient grudge this time to his heart's content.

All on a sudden, densest darkness enveloped the land. A furious cyclone roared in the sky. The strongest of trees fell to pieces with a dreadful crash. Clouds poured down torrential showers. The earth from time to time was rent with sounds of thunder. Peaks of high hills were crumbled to dust. But with all this, Parsvanatha stood unmoved !

At this the rage of Samvara knew no bounds. He assumed the most horrible appearance and approached the harmless hermit like a living Death. The Luminary's

face was besmeared in black and he wore a necklace of human heads. His awful mouth was constantly vomiting fire and he rushed towards Parsva, furiously exclaiming, "kill ! kill !" Parsvanatha, however, was absolutely unperturbed !

The seat of Dharanendra in the nether region began to tremble, from which the King of the Nagas, through his clairvoyant knowledge, understood that great calamities were being showered upon the Lord. He said to his wife Padmavati. " That compassionate Lord is in danger now, to whose sweet teachings, although but heard at the time of our death, are due our royal wealth and splendour. We must do something for him."

The pious pair of Nagas came up and made obeisance to Parsvanatha. On all sides then there were pouring down hails and rains Dharanendra and Padmavati stood on the two sides of Parsvanatha and protected his head by spreading their hoods over him. Not a drop of water fell on the body of Parsvanatha who was under the widely expanded hoods of the grateful Serpent-couple. Samvara himself fled away at the sight of the dreadful pair.

One by one did Parsvanatha break the Karma-fetters. He became absorbed in White Contemplation and destroyed avarice etc. in even their minutest forms. It was an auspicious day, the fourteenth dark day of the moon in the month of Chaitra,—Parsvanatha cut off all the sixty-three ties included in the four modes of the Destructive Karma and attained the pure omniscience. He was now in the thirteenth stage of psychical development,—he was Emancipated—though—embodied.

The gods, headed by their Indras, came down and with pomp and splendour, celebrated the fourth Kalyana of the Lord.

X

When He attained omniscience, everything in the universe, came within the purview of Parsva's knowledge. Wherever he stayed, the sky was clear and the trees, bent with the weight of fruits and flowers. His seat was known as Gandha-kuti and he was found seated a little space higher up from its middle.

Swayambhu who was the Lord's Gana-dhara or apostle, now requested Parsvanatha to proclaim and preach the truth to the

world. The gods prepared the Assemby-hall for the Tirthamkara, called the Samavasarana. This great hall had twelve parts, and every species of being had its own allotted place there. It is said that a Samavasarana used to be erected for the preaching of Parsvanatha wherever he went.

At the request of Indra, Parsvanatha preached the true religion in distant different countries. He revealed the light of truth in Kasi, Kosala, Panchala, Maharashtra, Magadha, Avanti, Malava, Anga, Vanga and in all the other Aryan countries. Wherever he went, people there who were aggrieved, distressed and tired of the world, used to flock to him in their thousands, listen to his soothing speeches and accept the Jina faith. Many Ganadhara (i.e., Leaders of the Assembly) and learned teachers used to explain the various principles of the true faith in his assembly. It is said that 350 sages versed in the sacred lore, 10,000 sages versed in history, 1,400 saints possessed of the clairvoyant knowledge, 1,000 omniscient sages, 1,000 sages, possessed of supernatural powers called Vikriya, 750 saints, having telepathic vision,

600 scholars well-versed in logic, 16,000 ordinary saints, 36,000 nuns, 100,000 faithful house-holders, 300,000 faithful ladies and numerous gods, goddesses, even animals of the lower order, stayed with him. In a mysteriously divine sound, the compassionate Parsvanatha used to give religious and moral instructions to every one without distinction. All who listened to him were satisfied and obtained the much longed-for peace.

“Is the Lord truly such an unfailing source of peace and happiness?”—thought the luminary Samvara, “and is it true that there is no limit to his kindness?” Samvara came to the Samavasarana of the Lord. He attentively listened to all that fell from the lips of the Lord and lo! all on a sudden, the spirit of hostility that continued to assert itself within him from incarnation to incarnation, subsided. The wretch was now afflicted with remorse and began to cry like a child at the feet of the Lord. In Parsvanatha’s heart, there was unbounded kindness and sympathy for every one. He consoled Samvara who was his mortal adversary from birth to birth. By the grace of the

Lord, he too attained right vision and was put on the way to Liberation.

Seven hundred and fifty hermits who were utterly unwise and who were used to practise useless penances and suffer bodily pains, now adopted the enlightening faith of Parsvanatha. They reverently moved round the Lord several times and then bowed down to him. They regretted their unwise penances and attended to the Ganadhara Svayambhu's exposition of the scripture. Their infatuation was at last at an end.

Sixty-nine years and eleven months passed away thus after the attainment of pure knowledge by Parsvanatha.

Sammeda-Hill is sacred to the Jainas. Numerous saints and sages attained their salvation on that hill. From time immemorial, hermits tired of this world, used to reside there. After preaching his doctrines far and wide in the Aryan countries, the Lord Parsvanatha came to Sammeda-Hill. He was in the third stage of the purest (Sukla) contemplation. Up to this time he was in the thirteenth stage of self-development, known as the Sayoga-Kevali. Full one month passed away—Parsvanatha remained still, lost in contemplation

The period of his human life was now about to be over,—only that much of it remained, in which one could utter the five vowels viz., *A, E, U, Ri* and *Li*. For this short space of time, Parsvanatha was in the fourth stage of purest contemplation, the fourteenth stage of self-development, known as *Ayoga-Kevali*. Seventy years before, his *Ghatiya* (destructive) Karmas had been destroyed; and now, all the eighty-five modes of Karma, included in the four forms of *Aghatiya* Karma were annihilated.

It was the bright seventh day of the moon, having Bisakha as the star, in the month of Sravana. His Karmas all were destroyed and Parsvanatha attained the final Liberation. His spirit went to Siddha-Sila, the peaceful region of eternal bliss, at the top of the universe. His body remained lying on the summit of Sammeda. With him, thirty-six other saints attained salvation on that holy day.

To celebrate the last Kalyana, the Moksha-Kalyana, the gods with their Indras marched to Sammeda-Hill with gorgeous pomp. They took the mortal remains of the Lord on a diamond palanquin and worshipped them reverently. They poured sandal

and other sweet-scented substances on the sacred body and lowered their heads before it. Suddenly there shot from the head of the god Agnikumara, a blaze of heavenly fire. The gods burnt the body of the Lord in that fire. The place was filled with fragrant smoke. After the cremation, the gods put the sacred ashes on their heads and breasts and then marched back with triumphant songs and dances.

Parsvanatha is gone but his wholesome teachings are never to be blotted out. He is never to return from the peaceful region of Siddhasila ; yet his name is immortal in this transitory world. To this day, the Jainas worship him as the twenty-third Tirthamkara. Sammeda-Hill being known to this day as the Parsvanatha-Hill reminds the people of the world of the great Lord who attained the final Liberation there.

It is doubtful if the short account of Parsvanatha's life that we have given above, will be interesting to all readers. In it, there is no description of the madness in furious warfares, of dreadful bloodshed or of the anguish in separation of a lustful couple. It is expected, however, that one would not throw it aside in scornful haste,—seeing

that it presents the life-history of an Indian saint in an Indian fashion. Yet, there may arise the question,—was Parsvanatha an historical person ?

Recent researches prove the untenability of the position of those who maintain that Jainism is subsequent to Buddhism. It is an established fact that the twenty-fourth Tirthamkara Mahavira was not the founder of Jainism and that Jainism was a prevalent religion in India from long before Mahavira. The Buddhist records no where refer to the Jainas as a newly sprung religious sect. Accordingly, it may be said that there would at least be no serious inconsistency if Parsvanatha be supposed to be a real historical person, a preacher of the Jaina faith before Mahavira.

It would not be reasonable to deny the historicity of Parsvanatha on the ground that the story of his life contains the accounts of many supernatural phenomena. Even if we leave aside the accounts of the royal dynasties, as stated in the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Puranas, we find that numerous supernatural phenomena are connected with the lives of such historical persons as Vikramaditya, Bhoja-raja and

the early Rajput kings. If the mixture of supernatural accounts in their life-stories render the heroes unreal, we would not be justified in regarding Gautama Buddha and Asoka as historical persons. How many supernaturalities are connected with the stories of Christ and Mahomed ! Supernatural phenomena are connected even with the life-stories of Guru Nanaka, Kavira and Guru Govinda ! There are many persons even now who have actually come in contact with Keshava Chandra Sen and Rama-krishna Paramahamsa ; yet the stories of their lives are not free from supernaturalities. Hence it would not be proper to deny the historicity of Parsvanatha on the ground that many supernatural phenomena are connected with his story.

The debate between Kesi and Gautama is well known to the Svetambara Jainas though the Digambaras deny its authenticity. If that debate have any basis at all there cannot be any doubt as to the existence of Jainism before Mahavira and to the reality of Parsvanatha, as its one time leader. Sudharma-Gautama a disciple of Mahavira is said to have discussed with Kesi whether Lord Mahavira preached the

Truth and whether what he taught could really lead people to salvation. Kesi was a disciple of Parsvanatha and the leader of those Jainas who chose to follow Parsvanatha. He put many questions to Gautama and Gautama did rightly answer them. Kesi asked :—

“ According to Parsvanatha, the great vows are but four in number; why, then, did Vardhamana mention them as five ? ”

Gautama answered :—

“ Parsvanatha understood the spirit of the time and thought that the enumeration of the great vows as four would suit the people of his age. Mahavira stated the very same four vows as five in order to make the Jaina doctrine more acceptable to the people of his time. There is no essential difference in the teachings of the two Tirthamkaras.”

Kesi asked further :—

“ Parsvanatha prescribed both an inner covering and an outer ; but, how is it that Mahavira taught people to shake off all coverings ? ”

“ Here also,” answered Gautama, there is no real difference. Both the

Lords taught that Emancipation is attained through the three Jewels and that without them it is inattainable. Parsvanatha thought that there was no harm in putting on the clothes the way of an honest man and that there was rather an utility in wearing such clothes. Mahavira, on the contrary, thought that there was no use in wearing clothes. These two opinions are not necessarily contradictory; for, both the Tirthamkaras are agreed that unless and until all sorts of inner cravings are given up, Liberation is inattainable "

Many other such questions were put by Kesi and Gautama answered them all rightly. Thereby Kesi came to understand that there was no real difference between the teachings of Parsvanatha and Mahavira and from that day, the community led by Kesi became amalgamated with that, led by Gautama.

From the above account of the debate, the following things are clear. (1) Jainism existed from before Mahavira. (2) That pre-Mahavira Jainism regarded Parsvanatha as a Tirthamkara and accepted his sayings as the Gospel. (3) Mahavira modified and

enlarged what had already been taught by Parsvanatha; he preached nothing which was absolutely new. The historicity of Parsvanatha follows automatically from the Kesi-Gautama-Debate.

According to the Jainas, Parsvanatha attained Liberation about two hundred and forty-six years before the Nirvana of Mahavira. If 526 B.C. be held to be the year in which the Lord Vardhamana had his emancipation the year $526 + 246 = 772$ B.C. may be said to be the year of Parsvanatha's Nirvana. Parsvanatha lived in the world for full one hundred years and left home when he was thirty years old. Hence it may be concluded that he was born in the year 872 B.C. and left home in 842 B.C.

NOTICE:

The Jain Mittra Mandal, Delhi, was established in 1915 with the sole object of propagating amongst the masses the ideal truths of Jainism on a purely non-sectarian basis, and since that time it has firmly adhered to this principle. Among its manifold activities—too numerous to mention here (vide a copy of its last annual report), it has succeeded in publishing several tracts dealing with various theses; it has arranged preaching of Jainism by eminent scholars on various occasions, the last one being on the occasion of the Mahavir Jayanti in April 1928. To those seekers after truth, whether they be Jains or non-Jains who are interested in philosophy and theology, the Mandal is always prepared to supply the requisite information about Jainism, their misconceptions about it, and to foster the growth of that love which emanates from Ahimsa, and which alone can bring the various communities of all living beings into closer bonds of mutual good-will and fellow-feeling.

